(iv) For subscribers of fixed lines in rural areas, the Charges are lower than those in urban areas. No such concession is given in the case of mobile telephones.

(v) STD and ISD tariffs have greatly decreased due to TRAI's decisions and competition between service providers.

(c) The Government no longer fixes tariffs for telephones services. The power of fixing tariffs for various telecom services is now mandated to TRAI under the TRAI Act, and the TRAI along with the competition between service providers now determine the tariff.

V.P.T. facility by BSNL

226. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, a Public Sector Enterprise, is being entrusted the responsibility of providing Village Public Telephone facility throughout the country;

(b) if so, the number of village in the country which would be provided with this facility;

(c) whether a time-frame has been chalked out for this task; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) is providing the Village Public Telephones (VPTs) throughout the country except in those to be provided by private Basic Service Operators and BSNL has accordingly drawn up plans to provide VPTs in the remaining 34,469 villages of its share by 2003-2004.

Licenses to private companies for deployment of village phones

227. SHRI C. O. POULOSE:
SHRI V. V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the private basic phone companies were awarded